



Keynote Address

Check against Delivery

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Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen

It is my privilege to address you, on behalf of the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, Dr. Vera Songwe, and welcome you to the 3rd Conference on Land Policy in Africa.

I would like to extend our gratitude to the Republic of Cote D'Ivoire and the African Development Bank for hosting the third Conference on Land Policy in Africa. As the host institution of the second land conference, we recognize the tremendous effort that goes into hosting this conference.

Effective land governance is critical to achieving Africa's development, particularly Agenda 2063. Globally, success in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is underpinned by good land governance, as it contributes to eliminating poverty and hunger; promoting sustainable agriculture; advancing gender equality and women empowerment; and promoting inclusive economic growth; among other development objectives.

As you know, land is a foundational asset upon which economies are built and property rights are essential for creating a conducive environment for attracting private sector investment. A well-functioning land sector incentivizes land holders and investors, supports land markets, reduces inefficiencies and avails mechanisms for resolving land disputes. In creating a positive investment climate through effective land governance, governments can contribute to reducing cost of doing business and decrease investment risks increasing investment attractiveness. By contrast, land users and investors incur considerable costs in terms of time and money where the land governance and administrative framework is unclear, unpredictable and cumbersome.

An environment of legal uncertainty not only undermines business confidence, but can foster corruption. Undeveloped systems with complex and unclear administrative processes contribute to lack of transparency and accountability in the administration of land. These conditions increase the likelihood of corruption. Corruption in the land sector has far-reaching implications for Africa's development. A 63-country Transparency International study reveals a correlation between lower prevalence of corruption in the land sector and development indicators, higher levels of foreign direct investments and increased crop yield.¹

Effective land governance and management is also indispensable to efforts to promote inclusive and sustainable socioeconomic development in support of Africa's structural transformation. Secure land rights for women can also increase women's ability to enter into agricultural contracts in 'win-win' land based investment models. This is particularly important because women's land related vulnerabilities are often exacerbated by increased demand for land and women are typically not well positioned to benefit from investment opportunities. In general, inclusive growth is more likely where the land governance framework and business models support equitable distribution of benefits and risks among key actors ensuring that private sector engagements are economically viable, equitable, and sustainable.

Systematically addressing land tenure insecurity through responsive land policies and effective land administration/ land service delivery systems can also facilitate physical infrastructure development (e.g. roads, irrigation) addressing constraints that increase transactional costs and

¹ Transparency International and Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Working Paper. (2011). *Corruption in the Land Sector*

stifle economic growth. ECA's new strategic focus now includes the creation of a business enabling environment for harnessing and mobilization of innovative finance for infrastructure, energy and services; as well as private sector investment in agriculture.

In recognition of the significance of land to Africa's transformation and to ensure that the land sector effectively performs its appropriate role in Africa's development, African Heads of States adopted the AU Declaration on Land Issues and Challenges in Africa in 2009. In doing so, they committed to establish and sustain strong systems of land governance rooted in principles of equity, efficiency, and sustainability.

The ten-year benchmark of the AU Declaration on Land is an opportune time to reflect on our progress, examine our assumptions, and reaffirm our commitment to effectively implement the AU agenda on land. There is cause for optimism as there has been steady progress in improving land governance frameworks in Africa over the last decade. As a result of the joint effort of the AU, UNECA and AfDB through the LPI/ALPC, land has been progressively integrated in development strategies and plans at continental, regional and national levels. Land governance is now an integral part of the three regional institution's (AU, ECA, AfDB) programmes and features prominently in IGAD programmes. At country level, land governance has been mainstreamed in the national strategies and investment plans of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Madagascar, Malawi, Rwanda and Tanzania.

Capitalizing on the research mandate, operational reach and convening power of our three regional intuitions, LPI/ALPC generated policy oriented research and provided technical support to 17 member states to either reform their land policies and/or develop programs on land governance in accordance with the AU Framework and Guidelines. In regards to research, LPI/ALPC recently undertook a study on Ethnicity and Conflict, which demonstrated the relationship between land, ethnicity and conflicts in Africa. Following the recommendations, guidelines on addressing and preventing land and ethnic based conflicts were prepared for and endorsed by AU STC in 2019. Training of key stakeholders also formed part of LPI's/ALPC's efforts to enhance knowledge and skills with over 3,000 people trained, one third of whom were women. To ensure sustainability, the LPI focused on enhancing the capacity of institutions of higher learning including through

curricula development; north/south-south partnerships; and networking with the Network of Excellence on Land Governance in Africa as a key flagship and amplifier with regard to training, research and technical support to Member States. To optimize effectiveness, ALPC structured NELGA in line with the regional specificities thus NELGA features seven regional university nodes (Institut Agronomique et Vétérinaire (IAV) Hassan II in Morocco, for North Africa; L'Université Gaston Berger in Senegal for francophone West Africa; Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, for anglophone West Africa; University of Yaoundé in Cameroon for Central Africa; Namibian University of Science and Technology for Southern Africa; Ardhi University in Tanzania for Eastern Africa and the University Western Cape as a special node to support capacity building in the land sector in Africa by delivery of short term courses for land professionals.)

As most of you know, the LPI/ALPC established the biennial Conference on Land Policy in Africa to serve as a platform for experience sharing and learning in support of effective implementation of the AU agenda on land. Your deliberations during the 3rd Conference on Land Policy in Africa will allow us to collectively reflect on the opportunities and constraints related to effective implementation of the AU Declaration on Land. Your contribution will also avail opportunities for seeking synergies as we proceed to implement the AU Declaration on Land.

Thank you for your commitment and continued support. I am confident we can move the land agenda forward to unlock opportunities for Africa's transformation.